

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BOGOTA 06339 082220Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 EB-07 AID-05 COME-00 LAB-04 SIL-01 MCT-01
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P R 082106Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2502
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL CALI
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PDIP PINS PINT ECON ELAB CO
SUBJ: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENT LOPEZ WAS ACCUSED OF PARTIALITY WITH REGARD TO PARTY CANDIDACIES, WHILE THE CONSERVATIVES FOCUSED ON THE MAN WHO APPEARS TO BE THEIR PRIMARY PRESIDENTIAL HOPE. THE MINISTER OF LABOR ANNOUNCED THAT COLOMBIA WOULD FOLLOW THE U.S IF IT LEFT THE ILO. THE COST OF LIVING CONTINUED TO INCREASE BUT AT A SLOWER RATE. THE ASSASSINATION OF A RETIRED MILITARY OFFICER AND AN ATTACK AGAINST THE HOME OF AN AIR FORCE GENERAL IN BOGOTA HIGHLIGHTED THIS WEEK'S VIOLENCE. A LETTER BY MIAMI'S MAYOR FERRE CONTINUED TO FOCUS PRESS ATTENTION ON THE CABRANRES STORY.

2. PRESIDENT ACCUSED OF PARTIALITY IN PRESIDENTIAL PRE-CANDIDACIES. FACTIONS OF BOTH THE LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE PARTIES ATTACKED PRESIDENT LOPEZ FOR ALLEGED PARTIALITY
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PAGE 02 BOGOTA 06339 082220Z

IN CAMPAIGNS FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACIES. LIBERAL PARTY PRE-CANDIDATE AND EX-PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS ACCUSED LOPEZ OF WORKING AGAINST HIM AND SUPPORTING THE CANDIDACY OF JULIO CESAR TURBAY. LEADERS OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY'S OSPINA-PASTRANA WING SIMILARLY CHARGED LOPEZ WITH FAVORING THE ALVARISTA WING OF THE PARTY BY USING POLITICAL APPOINTEES TO ORGANIZE PRO-ALVARISTA MEETINGS. GOVERNMENT

SPOKESMEN HAVE DENIED THE CHARGES, WHILE TURBAY SUPPORTERS CLAIMED THAT LLERAS WAS MERELY PREPARING AN EXCUSE FOR HIS EVENTUAL DEFEAT FOR THE LIBERAL NOMINATION. MEANWHILE, OSPINA-PASTRANA CONSERVATIVES SOUGHT A CLARIFICATION BY BELISARIO BETANCUR OF HIS POSSIBLE CANDIDACY AND HIS POSITIONS ON VARIOUS ISSUES, BEFORE THEY WOULD AGREE TO SUPPORT HIM. THE ALVARISTA WING ALREADY SUPPORTS A BETANCUR CANDIDACY. COINCIDENTALLY, BETANCUR INDICATED THAT HE MIGHT BECOME THE CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE IF THIS WOULD UNIFY THE PARTY, THE CLOSEST HE HAS YET COME TO EXPRESSING AN INTEREST IN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY NOMINATION.

3. COLOMBIA MAY WITHDRAW FROM ILO. LABOR MINISTER OSCAR MONTOYA STATED UPON HIS RETURN FROM THE ANNUAL ILO CONFERENCE THAT THE GOC WOULD FOLLOW THE US IF IT SHOULD DECIDE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE ILO, SINCE THAT ORGANIZATION HAS BECOME POLITICIZED. COLOMBIAN EMPLOYER AND UNION LEADERS ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN ILO AFFAIRS SUBSEQUENTLY SUPPORTED THIS STATEMENT. (BOGOTA 6162).

4. RISE IN COST OF LIVING SLOWS. OFFICIAL FIGURES RELEASED THIS WEEK INDICATE THAT DURING JUNE THE COST OF LIVING INCREASED 2.6 PERCENT FOR EMPLOYEES, AND 3.3 PERCENT FOR WORKERS, THE LOWEST MONTHLY INCREASES SINCE JANUARY. NEVERTHELESS, CUMULATIVE TOTALS FOR THE FIRST 6 MONTHS OF THE YEAR NOW STAND AT 23.6 PERCENT FOR EMPLOYEES AND 28.9 PERCENT FOR WORKERS, WITH THE AVERAGE FOR THE TWO INDICES EXCEEDING THE 25.7 PERCENT RATE FOR ALL OF 1976. FOOD PRICES CONTINUE TO LEAD THE WAY, WITH THE AVERAGE COST OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BOGOTA 06339 082220Z

FOODSTUFFS UP 55 PERCENT SINCE JANUARY 1. WHILE WE MAINTAIN OUR PROJECTIONS OF AN AVERAGE INCREASE FOR 1977 OF 35 - 38 PERCENT, WAGE INCREASES ARE LIKELY TO BE WELL BELOW THOSE FIGURES WITH THE RESULT THAT MOST WORKERS AND SALARIED EMPLOYEES WILL EXPERIENCE A LOSS IN REAL PURCHASING POWER.

5. PUBLIC ORDER. A RETIRED AIR FORCE COLONEL AND CHIEF OF OPERATIONS AT THE BOGOTA AIRPORT WAS ASSASSINATED, POSSIBLY BY CRIMINALS RATHER THAN FOR POLITICAL MOTIVES. ALSO IN BOGOTA, TWO MILITARY GUARDS AT THE HOME OF THE CHIEF OF THE AIR FORCE GENERAL STAFF WERE SHOT, ONE FATALLY, IN AN APPARENT ATTEMPT TO STEAL THEIR WEAPONS. FOUR POLICE GUARDS HAVE BEEN ASSASSINATED IN RECENT MONTHS IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES, MOST OF THEM WHILE GUARDING EMBASSIES. IN AN APPARENT ATTEMPT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PUBLIC REVULSION OVER RECENT CRIMINAL ACTIVITY, THE PRO-SOVIET FARC AND THE CUBAN-LINE ELN GUERRILLA ORGANIZATIONS WARNED THAT THEY WILL EXECUTE CRIMINALS WHO ENGAGE IN EXTORTION, KIDNAPPING, AND MURDER WHILE POSING AS LEFTIST GUERRILLAS. THE FARC CLAIMED TO HAVE EXECUTED 10 SUCH CRIMINALS IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS AND TO HAVE BURNED MARIJUANA FIELDS IN EASTERN COLOMBIA. MEANWHILE, THE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THAT THE STATE OF SIEGE WOULD CONTINUE IN EFFECT, SUPPOSEDLY TO ASSIST THE AUTHORITIES IN

MAINTAINING PUBLIC ORDER.

6. CABRANES CONTROVERSY CONTINUES IN LOCAL PRESS. THREE OF BOGOTA'S LEADING DAILIES ON JUNE 6 CARRIED FURTHER ARTICLES (SEE BOGOTA 5630) SPECULATING ON THE REASONS FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE NOMINATION OF JOSE CABRANES AS US AMBASSADOR TO COLOMBIA. THE LIBERAL "EL TIEMPO" AND CONSERVATIVE "EL SIGLO" PUBLISHED A WASHINGTON AP STORY REFERRING TO A LETTER FROM MIAMI MAYOR FERRE TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN IN WHICH THE MAYOR ALLEGES, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THAT VENEZUELA'S AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON INTERCEDED WITH THE GOC ON BEHALF OF CABRANES. A FRONT PAGE ARTICLE IN THE CONSERVATIVE "LA REPUBLICA" MAINTAINED THAT THE NOMINATION WAS SPURNED BY THE GOC IN RETALIATION FOR WASHINGTON'S SUPPOSED REJECTION OF EX-FINANCE MINISTER RODRIGO BOTERO AS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 BOGOTA 06339 082220Z

AMBASSADOR TO THE US. QUOTING AN "IRREPROACHABLE" SOURCE, THE ARTICLE CLAIMED THAT THE GOC WOULD HAVE REJECTED ANY US CANDIDATE, REGARDLESS OF HIS ORIGINS, IN ORDER TO "GET EVEN."
DREXLER

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